OPENING REMARKS AT THE WORKSHOP ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN ASSET RECOVERY PRACTITIONERS’ FORUM FOR AFRICA, ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

by
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African Union Advisory Board Against Corruption

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SALUTATIONS
It is with great enthusiasm and optimism that I stand before you today to extend a warm and heartfelt welcome. Together, we gather here with a shared purpose and a collective commitment to addressing one of the most pressing challenges of our time—illicit financial flows, corruption, and recovering of stolen assets.

Corruption is a scourge that has affected everyone and has devastated many nations. Recognizing the need to have a unified approach in combatting corruption, The African Union adopted the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combatting Corruption. Article 16 of the Convention has mandated State parties to confiscate proceeds and instrumentalities of corruption. Criminals must not benefit from stolen assets so that it deters others from engaging in corrupt practices.

Furthermore, Member States Adoption of the Common African Position on Asset Recovery (CAPAR) in February 2020 as a policy framework to support the fight against illicit financial flows and bringing a common position on recovery of stolen assets. These are assets that are outside the African continent as well as those within. CAPAR has given us momentum toward our purpose, which is deeply rooted on the principles of openness, accountability, and fairness. This inspiring policy framework is a brave step forward, serving as a call to action for group action against the plague of
illegal money flows that have damaged our economy and jeopardized the welfare of our citizens.

4. At the foundation of CAPAR is a strong dedication to cooperation, capacity building, and policy innovation. It's more than just a paper; it's a transformational road plan. CAPAR's four strategic pillars outline a path for improved transparency, reforming government, and returning stolen assets to their rightful owners—African citizens.

5. We must, however, not ignore the importance of implementation as we set out on this path. We must remain unwavering in our determination to turn rhetoric words into action, and aspiration into achievements as the success of CAPAR hinges not on its eloquence but on its execution.

6. The African Union Advisory Board Against Corruption and the African Union Commission recognizes that to realize this vision and goal, we don't need policy pronouncements or declarations; we need dedicated practitioners/individuals dedicated to the cause of justice. We need You, the frontline fighters against corruption; You are the ones with the keys to success and victory.

7. Today, let us reflect on the path that brought us here, remembering the various stories of communities deprived of basic necessities and hopes dashed by a few. These are not rhetorical stories or theoretical ideas but lived realities. When the core of CAPAR is examined, it reflects our combined knowledge, condensed into doable tactics to fight corruption, and guarantee that pilfered property is properly restored to its original owners—the African people.

8. In this context, practitioners are not merely enforcers of the law; you are architects of change. You possess the firsthand knowledge to identify gaps, overcome challenges, and seize opportunities. CAPAR is our guiding compass, but its success hinges on your dedication, commitment, skill, and expertise.

9. The formation of an Asset Recovery Practitioners' Forum will not only foster a community of collaboration and shared expertise but will also serve as a
knowledge nexus where practitioners from all over Africa can gather, exchange best practices, and form alliances.

10. Challenges abound, ranging from jurisdictional complexities to limited resources. However, adversity fosters creativity. Let us not forget that every recovered asset tells a story about resources diverted from essential services and opportunities denied to those in need. The Asset Recovery Practitioners' Forum is our opportunity to rewrite these narratives and pave the way for a better future for Africa.

11. During the commemoration of the 20th anniversary of the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption, in July 2023, Member States recommended that Asset Recovery should be a priority and focus area in the next decade. This therefore means that CAPAR will remain high on the agenda of African Union and the establishment of a forum for practitioners on asset recovery is equally important.

12. This is the reason why implementing the recommendations of CAPAR is a priority for the AUABC and the African Union in general and we are elated to have this Forum launched and we hope all our partners will join and support us to ensure its sustainability.

13. I would like to thank the GIZ- Global Platform for Combatting Illicit Financial Flows for the support they have been rendering to AUABC specifically in support of CAPAR. Since the Dakar Workshop in 2022, GIZ has provided for the financial and technical support which has enabled us to convene today.

14. I would like to thank the Government Federal Republic of Ethiopia for welcoming us and hosting us in this beautiful city of Addis Ababa.

15. As I conclude, I would like to wish all of us a successful deliberation as we tighten all the bolts and nuts that will ensure that the Forum is well established with proper structures and mechanism that will live beyond all of us. In the end what we want to achieve is to have an effective and efficient Forum that will contribute to the Identification, Recovery, Return and
Effective management of Recovered assets through an enhanced collaboration of all stakeholders. a. e.

16. Equally I thank all of you for taking your time to be here. I wish you a very successful meeting.

    I thank you all for your kind attention.

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